

Shades of Black, White, and Gray: News Media Coverage of the Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey

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Abstract

The Department of Defense (DoD) on November 23, 1999 released two reports dealing with equal opportunity in the United States military services. One study, the *Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey*, provided information on the perceptions of equal opportunity and treatment of active duty Service members and the other, *Career Progression of Minority and Women Officers*, examined equal opportunity in recruiting, commissioning, training, assigning, evaluating, promoting, and retaining active duty members. After discussing an overview of the reports, some background on racism, the roles of the press, and journalistic values, this study turns to a content analysis. This paper presents an examination of how news media reported available information and what commentaries were generated by the DoD studies. Expected results were that journalists would emphasize some points of the survey while neglecting others, and reporting in most cases would be rather superficial, compared to the amount of information available to reporters. Various stories and commentaries are quoted as examples. Portions of the report that could have been emphasized, but were not are pointed out in the discussion.

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